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RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: PACOM COMMANDER KEATING'S FEB 19 MEETING WITH
DEFENSE MINISTER HAMADA

Classified By: James P. Zumwalt, Charge d'Affaires, a.i.; reasons 1.4 (b/d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada told visiting PACOM Commander Timothy Keating on February 19 that realignment of U.S. forces should move forward and that the signing of the Guam International Agreement during Secretary Clinton's visit was a major step in that direction. He stressed that being cautious with public remarks in Japan's current political climate is critical. He suggested that a Security Consultative Committee ("2-plus-2") meeting should take place as early as possible. ADM Keating praised the Japan Self Defense Force's participation in the recent Cobra Gold exercise and promised to convey Hamada's interest in an early SCC meeting to Secretary Gates. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Visiting PACOM Commander Timothy Keating called on Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada on February 19. ADM Keating praised the Japan Self Defense Force's (JSDF) role in the recent Cobra Gold exercise held in Thailand. The exercise helped all participating forces gain valuable experience in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), peacekeeping operations (PKO), and medical, dental, and engineering civil assistance. Both the people of Thailand and the participating troops benefited immensely from the exercise. Keating also stated he is heartened by Secretary Clinton's remarks during her visit to Japan stressing the importance of the bilateral military-to-military relationship and the overall strength of the Alliance. Hamada expressed appreciation for the opportunity for the JSDF to participate in Cobra Gold, adding that he also believed the Secretary's visit helped steer the Alliance in the right direction. This, in addition to Prime Minister Aso's February 24 visit to the United States, would only help strengthen the Alliance and resolve of a number of outstanding bilateral issues, Hamada said.

13. (C) Hamada stressed that the signing of the Guam International Agreement (GIA) during Secretary Clinton's visit was a big step forward for the realignment of U.S. forces, adding that the realignment roadmap must be implemented without fail. He underscored the difficult current political environment in Japan, pointing out that he exercises caution with every public remark. No amount of

effort can turn the time back on misstatements by government officials, Hamada said.

¶4. (C) Hamada told ADM Keating that he had suggested to Secretary Clinton the two sides should convene a foreign and defense "2-plus-2" Security Consultative Committee (SCC) ministerial as soon as possible, given the numerous issues both governments need to address. He said he feels encouraged by the close relationship between ADM Keating and Chief of Joint Staff ADM Takashi Saito and hopes to be able to develop a similar relationship with Secretary Gates. In this regard, he wants to meet Secretary Gates as soon as possible, Hamada said. Keating offered to convey personally to Secretary Gates Hamada's interest in an early meeting, noting that Secretary Gates understands clearly Japan's security issues, including BMD cooperation, anti-piracy, and the realignment of U.S. forces. He also pointed out Secretary Gates' interest in attending the Shangri-La Conference, which could be a possible opportunity for them to meet. Hamada responded that he would take advantage of any occasion to meet with Secretary Gates.

¶5. (U) ADM Keating did not have a chance to clear this message.
ZUMWALT